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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 002487

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAI CAMBODIAN BORDER DISPUTE: FOREIGN MINISTERS
AGREE ON INTERIM MEASURES

REF: A. BANGKOK 2464
[1](#)B. STATE 86724
[1](#)C. BANGKOK 2428
[1](#)D. PHNOM PENH 679

Classified By: Charge D'Affaires James F. Entwistle, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a August 19 meeting the Thai and Cambodian Foreign Ministers agreed on measures designed to provide for a way forward in dealing with the disputed Preah Vihear temple. As previewed by Thai MFA officials last week, the two sides agreed to reduce the number of troops in the area around the temple, recommended scheduling the next Joint Border Committee (JBC) meeting in October to discuss surveying and demarcating the disputed area, and to begin discussions regarding the Ta Moan temple. The two sides were unable, however, to come to an agreement on mechanisms to move forward on dealing with the Cambodian settlement located within the disputed area. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Thai Foreign Minister Tej Bunnag and Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong agreed to a series of measures during their August 18-19 meeting regarding the disputed Preah Vihear temple. While the measures do not set out a path to resolve the dispute, they do provide for provide for mechanisms to relieve tension and to facilitate further talks. Thai MFA Deputy Spokesperson Thani Thongphakdi told us that the bilateral talks are an ongoing process but that both sides had demonstrated more flexibility in trying to accommodate each sides' limitations in their negotiating positions.

AGREEMENT TO PROCEED THROUGH BORDER COMMITTEES

[1](#)3. (C) The two foreign ministers agreed to convene August 29 in Cambodia a meeting of the Regional Border Committee (RBC) to discuss the second phase of troop redeployment out of the Keo Sikha Kiri Svava pagoda in the temple. The Thai MFA confirmed to us that Royal Thai Army Second Area Commander Lieutenant General Sujit Sitthiprapa would lead the Thai delegation at the RBC meeting. The two sides also agreed to recommend to their governments that the next meeting of the Joint Border Committee (JBC) be held the first week of October. The foreign ministers also recommended that legal experts join the JBC to discuss a plan to demarcate the disputed area at Preah Vihear and to discuss the Ta Moan temple (Ref D). The foreign ministers would meet again after

the JBC meeting. As such, the end result of the foreign ministers' meeting was an endorsement of the JBC as the primary mechanism to resolve the dispute.

14. (C) As explained to us earlier by Thai MFA officials (Ref A.), the Constitutional Court's interpretation of Article 190 of the Thai Constitution compels the MFA to seek approval from Thai government for this interim agreement. Media reports indicate that the interim agreement will go to the Cabinet next week and afterwards to the Parliament for approval.

15. (C) Jakrit Srivali, speechwriter for FM Tej, attended the meeting and told us that despite both sides' demonstrated flexibility during the meeting, the foreign ministers were unable to agree on a provisional arrangement that would lay out a framework for the redeployment of troops or to direct the JBC to address the Cambodian settlement near the disputed temple (Ref A.) As reported reftel, this settlement has become a key issue for the RTG as the Thai consider it to be a breach of the 2000 MOU on the survey and demarcation of the land Thai-Cambodia boundary. As such, the provisional arrangement remains a sticking point for the foreign ministers.
ENTWISTLE